

Spice it Up a Notch with Nutmeg: What's a Good Discussion Response?

Standards Addressed:

National Educational Technology Standards

- **2b.** Communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats

21st Century Skills:

Learning and Innovation Skills Communication and Collaboration

- Articulating thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively through speaking and writing

ICT Literacy

- Using digital technology, communication tools and/or networks appropriately to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information in order to function in a knowledge economy

Effective Teaching Strategies Used

Cooperative Learning
Questioning
Providing Feedback
Similarities and Differences

Materials

- Threaded Nutmeg Book Student Discussion Responses
- Chart paper
- Nutmeg wikis:

Intermediate wiki
<http://nutmeg2009.sblc.wikispaces.net>

Teen wiki
<http://nutmegteen2009.sblc.wikispaces.net>

Teacher Note

A large list of student responses has been provided. There is an Intermediate and Teen list. They are organized first, by the Nutmeg book they respond to, and second, by their discussion thread question. You might want to give each group a different set of questions, or use the same set of questions for everyone.

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What's a Good Discussion Response?

Overview:

- The purpose of this lesson is to help students analyze responses and determine the characteristics which constitute a good threaded discussion post. Students will be reading archived Nutmeg wiki threaded discussion responses and ranking them based on each student's perception of what is good and what isn't. As a class they will develop a list of tips for writing a good discussion response which they can use to help inform their writing and post on the Nutmeg wiki. You might want to pre-assess students using the **Student Discussion Response Formative Assessment**.

Students will:

- Recognize and apply the qualities of a good response.

Essential Questions:

- How can we communicate ideas effectively?
- Is the way you say something as important as what you say?

Guiding Questions:

- What makes a response good?
- How is communicating in person different from communicating online?

★ Set the Purpose for Learning

Introduce this lesson by saying,

- *"You've been reading the Nutmeg nominees, and you're probably ready to share some of the opinions, ideas and questions that you have about the books online. So, let's talk about doing that."*
- *"Have you ever participated in an online discussion? What was it like? How do you feel about other people's posts? Which ones do you take seriously, which ones don't you think have value? Why?"*
- *"Is writing online the same as having a discussion in person? Why or why not?"*
- *"So that your posts are taken seriously, we're going to create a list of tips for writing a good response. We can even share our tips with others on the Nutmeg wiki."*

★ What? Learning Activities

1. Introduce the ranking activity. *"Here are some examples of student responses from last year's Spice it Up a Notch with Nutmeg! 2008 project's discussion boards. We are going to read them, and individually rank them from worst to best. As you are reading and deciding on how you will rank the responses, think about what it is that made you choose to rank one response better or worse than another. Be prepared to share your thoughts in small groups."*
2. After individual ranking is completed, students in small groups will discuss their choices. This discussion will lead them to determining what was present in the best responses, and what could have been added to make the "not so good" responses better. In their small groups, students will create a list of key characteristics on chart paper that were present in the best responses.
3. As a whole class, students will share their lists and any observations that they formed while creating them. Discuss the following with students: *"Was this a difficult task? Did you all agree with each other's ranking? How did you handle not agreeing? How would it have been different if you had to communicate your opinions without being able to see or talk to each other? How important is the way we communicate?"*

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4. Create the following comparison matrix:

	Face to Face		Online		What it feels like
	Look like:	Sounds like	Look like:	Sounds like	
Respect					
Listening					
Cooperating					
Staying On Topic					
Disagreeing					
Agreeing					

In small groups or whole class, students will compare face-to-face vs. online discussions. They will complete the chart discussing what each action (respect, listening, cooperating, disagreeing, agreeing, etc.) looks like, sounds like and feels like.

5. Use the lists of key characteristics created by groups and the completed comparison matrix to develop the class' list of discussion tips.

★ So What? Reflect and Connect

Guide a discussion with the following questions:

- "What did you learn from creating our list of tips? What are you wondering now?"
- "Do you feel that this will help you write better responses on the Nutmeg wiki discussion boards? Why or why not?"

★ Now What? Next Steps

Use the tips list as a self-evaluation guide.

Share your tips by posting them on the **Discussion Tips** page of the Nutmeg wiki.

Teacher Note

This is also an excellent opportunity to do some quick informal assessment of your students' reading comprehension by monitoring their discussion posts.

Responses can be quite informative of how well students are understanding what they have read.



Assessing Understanding

While students are discussing on the wiki, it is an opportunity for you to assess whether or not students understand and are able to apply the concepts and behaviors addressed in this lesson.